GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1750
ANSWERED ON:28.11.2001
COMBAT OF BIO-TERRORISM
P.D. ELANGOVAN

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have taken the necessary precautions and security measures to Combat Bio-terrorism or the indiscrete use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs);

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of the nodal agencies under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare given the assignment of tackling of Bio-terrorism?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (PROF. RITA VERMA)

(a) to (c) A statement is laid on the table of the Lok Sabha.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1750 FOR 28.11.2001

(a) & (b) : Action taken by the Department of Health, Govt. of India

1. A detailed list of biological agents used as weapons prepared by the Indian Council of Medical Research alongwith signs and symptoms, likely method of dissemination, incubation period, lethality and the availability of vaccines, anti-microbial therapy and treatment has been circulated to Health Secretary and Director of Health Services of all States/UTs, and Central Govt. hospitals advising them to take following precautionary steps.

- Earmarking of maximum number of beds for emergency contingency
- Stocking of vaccines/sera/drugs to the extent possible
- Setting up a special team of doctors for coordinated action. They should be sensitized on the impact of such weapons and treatment measures.

2. Two expert group meetings were held (1st & 17th October) in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to review the management (diagnosis, treatment, IEC activities etc.) of recently emerging diseases of public health importance like Dengue, Anthrax etc.Eminent experts in the field of medical science from different organizations in the country, senior officials of Ministry of Health & F.W., and chiefs of different Government and private hospitals in Delhi participated in the meeting and deliberated on various aspects of the bio-terrorism in the backdrop of the current global situation.

3. Two expert group meetings (18th and 21st October, 2001) were held to finalise guidelines to be issued in CD Alert.

4. National Institute of Communicable Diseases, 22, Sham Nath Marg, Delhi-110054, an Institute under Directorate General of Health Services has been designated as the nodal agency for carrying out the tests of suspected Anthrax samples. A round the clock control room is functioning (Telephonic Nos. 3912001 (Between 10.00 A.M. to 6.00 P.M.) & 3971875 (Between 6.00 P.M. to 10.00 A.M.) to receive and test the suspected samples.

5. CD Alert, a monthly Newsletter of National Institute of Communicable Diseases titled `Bioterrorism` Public Health system to Remain Alert` exclusively on Anthrax h as been widely circulated. It has also been put in the Website of MOHFW (http://mohfw:nic:in) for information of general public.

6. Do`s & Don`ts has already been published in the leading National Dailies regarding Anthrax.

7. A meeting-cum workshop on Biological & Chemical Terrorism was convened by the Department of Health on 29th October, 2001 in New Delhi wherein Health Secretary, Home Secretary and Director of Health Services from various States/UTs., eminent experts in the field of medical science from different organizations in the country and heads of different hospitals in Govt. and private sector in Delhi participated and deliberated on various aspects. The representatives from the States informed the preparatory measures taken by them and assured availability of drugs in adequate quantity to tackle any situation.

8. Continuing Medical Education activities are being conducted in the Central Govt. hospitals in Delhi to sensitise the medical and paramedical personnel on biological terrorism.

9. The situation is being monitored.

(c) National Institute of Communicable Diseases, 22, Sham Nath Marg, Delhi-110054 an Institute under Directorate General of Health Services has been designated as the nodal agency for carrying out the tests of suspected Anthrax samples. A round the clock control room is functioning (Telephone Nos. 3912901 (Between 10.00 A.M. to 6.00 P.M.) & 3971875 (Between 6.00 P.M. to 10.00 A.M.) to receive and test the suspected samples Till the evening of 23rd November, 2001, 312 suspected envelopes were received in the NICD for testing, 263 samples have already been tested, none was found positive.

List of some of the laboratories in India with facilities to confirm Anthrax Bacillus.

- National Institute of Communicable Diseases (Telephone No. 011-3912901, 011- 3971875, 011-3913148)
- National Institute of Cholera & Enteric Diseases, Kolkata (Diarrhoeal Diseases & other enteric pathogens) (Telephone No. 033-3501176, 033-3508493)
- Department of Microbiology, AIIMS, (Virology), (Telephone No. 011-6593288,011-6516181)
- National Institute of Virology, Pune (Viral Diseases excluding HIV/Polio) (Telephone No. 020-6124386)
- Enterovirus Research Centre, Mumbai (Polio) (Telephone No. 022-4148750)
- Vector control Research centre, Pondicherry (Vectors, Filariasis) (Telephone No. 0413-372041)
- Centre for Research in Medical Entomology, Madurai (Vectors & other vector borne diseases) (Telephone No. 0452-530746)
- Haflkin`s Institute, Mumbai.
- National Institute of Occupational Health, Megani Nagar, Ahmedabad- 380016 (Tele 079-2865142, 079-2867351)
- Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izat Nagar, UP 243122 (Tel. 0091-581-447069).